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THE GREAT VICTORY AT MANASSAS JUNCTION.
GOD THE ARBITER OF BATTLES.

A
THANKSGIVING SERMON,
PREACHED
IN THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
AT
CONCORD,
GREENE COUNTY, ALABAMA,

On the 28th day of July, 1861,

BY REV. T. S. WINN.

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S E R M O N .

1st. Samuel, 17th Chapter and 47th verse—"And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's."

Of the numerous enemies with whom the children of Israel were often called to contend, none gave them more trouble than the Philistines, their nearest neighbors. For hundreds of years they were a source of incessant annoyance to the people of God. Instead of remaining at home, attending to their own affairs, and enjoying their own rights and privileges, they seemed bent on the political and commercial subjugation of the Jews. Many were the bloody and destructive wars which they waged against this people. At the time to which our text refers, this troublesome enemy had again entered into a contest with the Israelites, and were in the act of attempting, for the seventh time, their ruin as a nation.

Saul was now the King of Israel, to whom all the people were looking for protection. But it was reserved for David, then an obscure individual, and a mere stripling of a shepherd boy to accomplish the deliverance of the nation.

It is to this war, the great battle which soon ensued, the victory which followed, the rejoicings and thanksgivings of the people, with other attendant circumstances, that we would this morning invite your attention.

And first, we will consider the character and position of the two combatants. When great nations are engaged in war, it is always a matter of considerable importance, not only to themselves, but to disinterested spectators, to know the relative position of the parties in the contest.

In the case before us, we have the Philistines on the one side, the old and deadly enemies of the Jews--a people, who for hundreds of years, had been trying to destroy them. A more irreconcilable and uncompromising enemy, no people ever had. To fall into the hands of the Philistines, was, in the estimation of the Jews, a very great calamity.

These Philistines were a numerous, wealthy and powerful people. At that day, their commerce is said to have been equal, if not superior, to that of any other nation in the world. They were noted for their many cities, which were well peopled, rich and powerful.—Along the whole coast on that part of the Mediterranean where their country lay, there was a line of towns running from North to South, greatly distinguished in history. Among them were Gaza, Ashdod,

Askalon, Gath and Ekron. It was evidently in their power greatly to harrass and injure any people whom they undertook to destroy.

This people were now engaged in a war entirely unnecessary and uncalled for. A war which the Israelites had not provoked, and which they would gladly have prevented. It was a war of conquest and subjugation. A war to gratify animosity, prejudice and passion. The two nations had been enjoying a short period of peace, when suddenly the Philistines are found arrayed for the battle, without any reasons assigned for so doing. We simply read: "Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered at Shochob, which belongeth to Judah, and pitched between Shochob and Azekah."

This army of the Philistines is supposed to have been a very large one. Their numbers are not stated, but we know that in their other war with Saul, only four years before, they had thrown over 300,000 men into the field. And as they were burning with revenge, and wished to retrieve the victory then lost, we may conclude that they had collected a mighty host for this war. A number calculated to overawe and crush all before them.

This army had crossed the borders of Palestine, and were now encamped on the soil of Judea. The Jews had the melancholy satisfaction of beholding them in their own country, at their very doors; for we are told that they "were gathered together at Shochob which belongeth to Judah." If their progress was not speedily arrested, they might, in a few days, overrun and subdue the whole country.

These Philistines seemed to have been led by one, in whom they placed the most implicit confidence, Goliath the giant. In height he was six cubits and a span, which is said to be equal to eleven feet and four inches. This giant was clad from head to foot with the heaviest armor, and bore the most formidable weapons. He had a helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail: and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him." With such a champion to lead them, the Philistines defied the armies of Israel. He was regarded by them very much as Gen. Scott has been regarded by the people of the North, an *invincible* leader.

But we must not neglect to add, that these Philistines were engaged in a bad cause, and were actuated by wrong motives. They had neither truth nor justice on their side. The God of the Bible was not their God. They were warring against the institutions of heaven, and were trying to overthrow the religion of the Jews. They boasted of their strength, defied Israel, and virtually, Israel's God also. Such we find to have been the character and position of the Philistines, one of the parties in this contest. Surely, no good could be expected of such a people, engaged in such a cause.

Let us next proceed to consider the character and position of the Israelites, the other party involved in this contest. Though we do not

pretend to claim for them immaculate perfection, though they were guilty of many sins, which called for immediate repentance before God, yet were they right as to the principles at stake in the present conflict. They were engaged in a war not of their own seeking.— Their country being invaded, their homes, many of them desolated, their rights assailed, their religion threatened, their property wasting, their countrymen being killed, and their national existence endangered, they rallied as one man at the call of Saul, their King. Acting purely on the defensive, they wanted to hold all that was lawfully their own, neither more nor less. They were fighting for their rights, their liberties and their religion. They were struggling to save their homes, their wives, their daughters, and their sons. A people who would not defend themselves under such circumstances, do not deserve the sympathy of either man or God. Their position, we think, bears a marked similarity to that of the people of these Confederate States. We, therefore, of all others on the earth, can appreciate the feeling of the Jews as they flew to arms and gathered around the banner of King Saul on the heights about Elah, just as our brave soldiers are now flocking to Manassas Junction and other points of danger.

Behold, my hearers, the position of these two opposing armies at this critical juncture in the war! Here they both are encamped in view of each other with but a small intervening space between them. "And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side; and there was a valley between them." Thus, for more than a month, they continued to occupy these positions without coming to a general engagement. The one is self-confident and defiant, trusting in their great champion, Goliath. The other is moving prudently, and secretly calling on God for help. The result of the pending struggle, who can foretell? Such was the state of things at this stage of the war.

We call your attention in the second place, to the battle which ultimately ensued between these two armies now encamped on opposite mountains. For a time the contest was delayed. Forty days intervened and no blow was struck. An insuperable difficulty seemed to be in the way of the Israelites. Goliath, the giant, held in terror the whole camp of the Hebrews. "And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, Goliath of Gath. And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. Give me a man that we may fight together. I defy the armies of Israel this day." Here then was the trouble. Where could one be found able and willing to cope with such a monster? "Not even the valiant Saul nor his daring son Jonathan, durst undertake the adventure." The king was so much troubled, that he offered large inducements to the man who would accept of the giant's challenge. "And it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house tree in Israel." Still no one offered himself. The cause of Israel languished. Things were beginning to assume a hopeless appearance.

Now there lived at this time in the town of Bethlehem-Judah, an old man by name Jesse, who had three sons in the army of Saul. David, the youngest, was retained at home "to feed his father's sheep." Being naturally anxious about the fate of his sons in the camp, the old man one day said to David, "take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and these ten cheeses, and run to the camp, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge. And David rose up early in the morning, and went, as Jesse had commanded him," and reached the place just in time to engage in the fight and save Israel a most disastrous defeat. One hour later, and the battle would have been lost. We are told, "And he came to the trench as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle. For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army." A few moments more, and the terrible clash of arms would come. Having dispatched his business with his brethren, David began at once to inquire into the state of things then existing between the two armies. Ascertaining that the dread of the giant had paralyzed every arm, so that defeat and ruin seemed to await the Israelites, he boldly stepped forward and accepted the challenge of Goliath; notwithstanding the opposition he met with from Eliab, his eldest brother, who accused him of being actuated by improper motives. Even Saul, who had been so anxious to find a man willing to cope with the giant, discouraged him from undertaking the contest. "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." But strong in his confidence in the righteousness of his cause, strong in the hope of obtaining help from God, and determined to wipe away the reproach from Israel, and save his country, he persisted in his determination, and went forth at once to meet the giant in the valley below.

It was a critical moment for millions of the human family. The fate of nations hung in the balance. All gazed in breathless suspense on the combatants as they stood face to face in sight of both armies. None can describe the emotions that must have swelled the bosoms of thousands of anxious spectators. Behold them, and observe the contrast! There is great Goliath, more than eleven feet high, clad from head to foot with a heavy armor, bold and defiant, looking with disdain upon David, and threatening to "give his flesh unto the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field." There is David on the other hand, a mere youth, only twenty-two years of age, of a moderate stature, fair and ruddy, with a mild but calm and determined expression of countenance, having only a staff in his hand, a shepherd's bag, a sling, and a few smooth stones out of the brook for his weapons. Hear his words and observe the secret of his success. "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom thou hast defied. And this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands." With these words, he hurled a stone from his sling at the giant,

pierced his forehead, the only exposed part of his body, and felled him to the earth. Then with a shout that almost shook the mountains around, did all Israel, to a man, pitch into the fight, and carry carnage and destruction into the ranks of the enemy. Blood flowed as was never before nor since seen in the valley of Elah. The Philistines, surprised and cast down in heart at the fall of their champion, became panic stricken, and fled in the utmost disorder toward their own country. Pursued by the Israelites to the gates of their cities, they perished by thousands on the wayside. "And the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath and unto Ekron." And the children of Israel returned from chasing after the Philistines, and they "spoiled their tents." Thus ended the great battle which for forty days had been so much dreaded. God had interposed, sent His servant David at the last moment to their assistance, and thus saved the country. It was the right man, at the right time, and in the right place; showing the truth of our text, that "the Lord saveth not with spear and sword; for the battle is the Lord's." He can use any means, however simple and insignificant, to accomplish his purposes.

The third and last point to which we would call your attention is, the manner in which the minds of the people at large were affected by the news of this great victory. We have noticed the gloom and distress which for months hung over the public mind. We have seen the danger to which the whole country was exposed. We have observed the consternation produced by the threats of the giant Goliath. But now that the battle has been fought, the victory won, and the power of the enemy crushed, we hear of nothing but gratitude, joy, and rejoicing throughout the whole country. A happier people for the time being never lived. None but those who have passed through similar scenes can appreciate their feelings. Sometime after the victory, Saul, accompanied by David, went on a triumphant progress through the cities of Israel that lay next to him, to receive the congratulations of the people. And when he made his entry into any place, it is said, that the women, who were represented more or less on the battle-field by their fathers, husbands, sons and brothers, "came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

And now, my brethren, my countrymen, one and all, in applying the subject which we have been discussing to the occasion which called us together this mornng, let me ask, of what have you been reminded by the events just narrated to this congregation? Have you not observed a striking coincidence between the situation of the Israelites in their contest with the Philistines and the situation of the people of this Confederacy in their present struggle with the Northern Government? The Philistines were the old and deadly enemy of the Jews; so, we think, the North has long felt and acted toward us. The Philistines were a numerous, wealthy and powerful people, possessing many commercial cities; so is it this day with the North.

The Philistines waged a war against the Jews provoked by themselves; so, as we believe, the North is now doing unto us. The Philistines invaded the the country of Judea, planting their unhallowed feet on the sacred hills of Canaan; so has the North not waited to be assailed by us, but has for months encamped on the soil of the South. The Philistines were backed by a powerful army; so is the North now gathering to its help hundreds of thousands. The Philistines placed unbounded confidence in their champion Goliath of Gath; so has the North from the beginning of this contest relied very much on the military genius and prowess of Gen. Scott, their great leader. The armies of the Philistines for forty days were encamped in close proximity to those of Israel; so has it been for about the same space of time with the armies of the Federalists and the Confederates. It reminds us of Alexandria and Fairfax, where their extended lines almost met, and the roll of the drum could be heard from the one to the other. The army of the Philistines was met and overthrown by Israel; the army of Federalists has just received a terrible defeat from the Confederates at Manassas Junction. The parallel between the two is so striking, the coincidence is so remarkable, that I have been amazed at the fact, in my investigation of the subject. It seems to me that there is meaning in all this. We hold it up for your consideration.

But to go more into particulars, we would remind you, that a little over a month ago, the President of this Confederacy, feeling the great responsibility on us in this solemn and momentous movement, believing in the righteousness of our cause, and conscious of entire dependence on "the God of battles" for success, appointed the 13th of June, as a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer throughout this entire Confederacy. We met here, and in the neighboring church of our Methodist brethren, in large and solemn assemblies, as did the people in almost every part of the land. We tried to humble ourselves before God, and to repent of all our sins, both individual and national. We asked forgiveness for the past, and implored assistance for the future. That day will long be remembered by the people of this generation. It was not a vain and useless ceremony. There is efficacy in faith, repentance and prayer. Events rolled rapidly on.—Large armies have been gathering on both sides, and numerous conflicts have occurred, which, in the main, have been wonderfully favorable to us. Within the last forty days, the two opposing armies have been approaching each other in the North of Virginia as we have already reminded you. We could almost say "the Federalists stood on a mountain on one side, and the Confederates stood on a mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them." It was evident that a great battle, which might decide the fate of the parties concerned, was fast approaching. It was now, as in the days of Israel, that the hopes and perhaps the destiny of millions, hung suspended in the balance. A turn either way would produce great results. At length, on the 18th of July, the enemy assailed our position at Bull's Run, and were three times repulsed with great slaughter. This was joy enough for one day and gave us a token of what was yet to fol-

low. But not content with this unsuccessful trial of their valor, after being reinforced by large numbers from Washington and other places, and headed, as we are informed, by Gen. Scott, the great Goliath of the North, they renewed the contest at Manassas Junction a few days afterward. Little did we think, as we assembled on Sunday last, in our several places of worship, and unitedly sent up our prayers to God for the success of our cause, that our fathers, husbands, sons and brothers were pouring out their life's blood on the battle field in defence of our rights, our liberty and our religion. It was an awful day. Such a strife, the people of America never witnessed. It was steel against steel, and sword against sword. Liberty and tyranny, truth and error, right and wrong, christianity and infidelity, Southern valor and Northern hate, tried their strength against each other.

The public journals inform us, that for many hours the contest raged with varied and doubtful success. At length, an important portion of the army being almost overpowered by numbers, evinced signs of giving way and retreating before the enemy. It was a critical hour. O for a David to crush the giant and his legions! A few moments more and all might be lost. But God hears prayer. In answer to our petitions on the 13th of July, in answer to the many prayers sent on high since the beginning of our troubles, He interposed in the needful hour and sent to the aid of our struggling soldiers, Jefferson Davis, our President, whom for that day at least, we take the liberty of denominating the David of the South. The iron horse, which for hours had been speeding its way from Richmond, at last landed its rider safely on the battle field. Inspired by the presence of such a man and led on by the genius and valor of Beauregard and Johnston, the battle was renewed with redoubled energy. A few hours more and the victory was won, and as I verily believe, the Confederacy has been saved. Young David of the South has crushed great Goliath of the North. If the battle was severe, the victory has been most complete. We "spoiled their tents."

And to-day, my countrymen, we meet here as christians, and as patriots, by the recommendation of our Congress, not to abuse our enemies, not exult over their loss, not to boast of our own valor, but to give thanks to Almighty God for the great victory which He, and He alone, has enabled us to achieve. We take none of the honor, none of the praise to ourselves. The whole work, from the beginning to the end, was the work of God. "And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's." No truth is more clearly and forcibly inculcated in the Scriptures than this, that God is the Arbiter of the battles of men. "Counsel is mine and sound wisdom. I am understanding. I have strength. By Me kings reign, and princes decree justice. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord. Some trust in chariots, some trust in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." I say again, that all the praise and glory of this great victory belong to God, and to God alone. We take none of it to ourselves. He gave us the men to fight this battle.

He nerved them for the conflict. He sustained them in the heat of the strife. He struck panic into the hearts of the enemy. He achieved for us the victory. We do therefore, this day, in behalf of the officers of this government, in behalf of the people of this Confederacy, in behalf of coming generations, and in the name of religion, liberty and humanity, publicly return our thanks to Almighty God for what he has enabled us to do. "Sing unto the Lord a new song. Sing unto the Lord with a harp, and with the voice of a psalm. Let the floods clap their hands, let the hills be joyful together before the Lord, for He hath done marvellous things. His right hand, and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory."

But think not, my hearers, when you shall have finished the services of this day, that you will have done your whole duty in the matter before us. Remember, that prayer and praise go together. We would just here remind you of your great danger. Success often makes men proud and self-confident. Beware that you do not, in the least degree, relax your efforts at the Throne of Grace. Indulge not the delusive thought that you have nothing more to do. The call for earnest and incessant prayer is louder than ever. There are indications that the strife has just fairly begun. The thirst of the enemy for blood is waxing stronger and stronger. We fear there are other terrible conflicts ahead. Put not your trust in men. But pray without ceasing, that God may not forsake us in this our hour of need. Pray that for the sake of his Son, Jesus Christ, who alone has the power to quell the raging storm of human passion, that He would enable us to continue triumphant to the end, and that He may soon secure to us an honorable and a permanent peace.

One word more, and we shall have done. Our joy to-day, alas! is not unmingled with grief. This great and glorious victory has cost us much. Many a noble son of the South has fallen a sacrifice in vindication of his country's rights. "In the midst of our rejoicings over the result of the conflict, let us drop a tear to the memory of those noble men who perished at the post of duty on the battle field. Let us not forget, at the same time, to sympathize with the families who have been so suddenly bereaved." Let us adopt, as our own, that Resolution of our Congress, which commends them to our sympathy and assistance. Let us bear the cases of the many widows and orphans thus left without a husband and father, to the Throne of Grace, and beseech for them the care and protection of Jesus, the friend of the afflicted.

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